



MSC CRUISES HERALDS NEXT PHASE OF INDUSTRY RESTART

Flagship MSC Virtuosa is first cruise ship to depart from the UK in 14 months

UK follows in the footsteps of Mediterranean restart in August 2020 when MSC Cruises became first line to offer international voyages

Geneva, Switzerland - 20 May 2021 - Cruising from the UK resumes today after a 14-month hiatus when *MSC Virtuosa* departs from the port of Southampton for a four-night sailing that marks the start of her maiden season at sea.

The MSC Cruises' flagship will be the first ocean liner to sail in British waters since the global cruise industry came to a voluntary halt in March 2020 as a result of the global pandemic ashore.

MSC Cruises was the first major cruise line to resume sailing in international waters in August 2020 when *MSC Grandiosa* began weekly cruises in the Mediterranean following approval by a range of European authorities for an advanced health and safety protocol that has since effectively set a new standard for the industry.

Gianni Onorato, CEO, MSC Cruises, said: *"We are very proud that MSC Virtuosa's first ever sailing marks the resumption of cruising from British ports after an enforced break of more than a year and effectively heralds the next phase of restart for our industry."*

"Our shipping prowess led the way last August with a health and safety protocol designed to protect our guests and crew, as well as the destinations that our ships visit. The data, knowledge and experience we have gleaned since our initial restart in the Mediterranean has helped us to drive forward with our plans to have nearly half of our fleet back at sea during this coming summer, with more to follow in other key markets around the world."

"Since our restart last August in the Mediterranean thousands of guests have had a safe and enjoyable cruise holiday on board one of our ships and we look forward to many more having the same well-earned relaxing breaks with their friends and families in the weeks and months ahead as more of our ships return to water in the UK, across the Mediterranean and Northern Europe."

MSC Virtuosa's UK cruises add to current sailings in the Mediterranean of *MSC Grandiosa* and *MSC Seaside* as MSC Cruises finalises its preparations to restart five more ships across East and West Mediterranean and in Northern Europe in the coming weeks following the go-ahead from relevant authorities to resume the Company's safe and responsible operations. MSC Cruises is also awaiting eagerly for authorities in the U.S. to allow for Caribbean voyages to resume, as well as other markets the Company has served traditionally.

The brand new environmentally-advanced 181,000 GT *MSC Virtuosa* will be available during the summer for British residents only and for guests of all ages who are either waiting for a COVID-19 vaccine or who have already been vaccinated. All guests are tested before they embark the ship and non-vaccinated guests are required to also show proof of a negative test conducted up to 72 hours prior to embarkation.

Other pre-boarding and onboard protective measures also apply to both guests and crew, in line with MSC Cruises' health and safety protocol that was developed last year with input from international health experts, including MSC Cruises' 'COVID-19 Blue-Ribbon Expert Group', and in close cooperation with national and regional health, transport and safety authorities throughout Europe.

Many of *MSC Virtuosa's* 1,150 crew have received COVID-19 vaccines as part of MSC Cruises' comprehensive and ongoing fleet-wide vaccination programme for all crew members that got underway at the beginning of May.

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ABOUT MSC VIRTUOSA

MSC Virtuosa is designed to offer a dynamic and dazzling guest experience with innovative features and facilities and she is also one of the most environmentally-advanced ships in MSC Cruises' fleet. Some of the highlights include:

- An enhanced MSC Yacht Club, with stylish private facilities and accommodation including a panoramic lounge, gourmet restaurant and private pool and sun deck
- MSC for Me – a multi-channel digital experience to help guests make the most of their holiday experience
- A choice of 10 restaurants and 21 bars including two brand-new specialty restaurant concepts – HOLA! Tacos & Cantina and Indochine
- A brand-new MSC Starship Club featuring the world's first humanoid robotic bartender offering a futuristic immersive bar and entertainment experience
- A 945-seater theatre and a stunning Carousel Lounge at the aft of the ship with live productions and shows every night
- Extensive facilities for children including LEGO® play areas and a Chicco baby club
- 112-metre-long Mediterranean promenade lined with boutiques bars and restaurants topped with a breathtaking LED sky screen with animations throughout the day and night
- Five swimming pools including an extensive magrodome pool and a 1,000sqm aquapark
- A dedicated entertainment area with an FI simulator, bowling alley and XD cinema
- A luxurious MSC Aurea Spa with a range of treatments and a state-of-the-art MSC Gym by Technogym®
- The largest shopping area at sea with 1,168 sqm of retail space including 11 boutiques and 250 different brands

As every ship that joins the MSC Cruises fleet, *MSC Virtuosa* is also equipped with a wide range of latest-generation environmental technologies and equipment to minimise her environmental footprint.

- **Air Emissions:** *MSC Virtuosa* features hybrid exhaust gas cleaning systems on all her engines. This technology achieves a 98% reduction of sulphur oxide (SOx) emissions. She is also equipped with cutting-edge selective catalytic reduction (SCR) systems that reduce nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions by 90%.
- **Shore power:** She is equipped with shore-to-ship power connectivity, allowing her to connect to local power grids while at ports where this infrastructure is available. This allows to minimise

engine use at berth, leading to a substantial emissions reduction when the ships are close to urban areas.

- **Wastewater:** MSC Virtuosa features advanced wastewater treatment systems designed in line with the International Maritime Organization's MEPC 227(64) Resolution, with purification standards that are higher than most wastewater treatment facilities ashore. Ballast water treatment systems will prevent the introduction of invasive species in the marine environment through ballast water discharges.
- **Protecting Marine Life:** She is equipped with an underwater radiated noise management system, with hull and engine room designs that minimise acoustic sound impact, reducing their potential effects on marine fauna, most particularly on marine mammals in the surrounding waters.
- **Energy Efficiency:** All MSC Cruises' newbuilds incorporate a wide range of energy efficient equipment that help reduce and optimise engine use. These include smart ventilation and advanced air conditioning systems with automated energy recovery loops that redistribute heat and cold to reduce demand. The ships use LED lighting controlled by smart management systems to enhance further the energy saving profile. In partnership with the shipyards, all new builds are fitted with remote energy monitoring and analysis systems, allowing real-time shoreside support to optimise operational efficiency onboard.